



# The University of Illinois Library

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THE GREAT MAN THEORY of historical development—that history is but the lengthened shadow of a dynamic personality—has a certain validity when applied to the growth of notable research libraries, despite the skepticism of historians as to the truth of the theory in general. It is hardly possible to name any famous library which has not been shaped and deeply influenced by one or more strong personalities.

Certainly, the distinction achieved by the University of Illinois Library during the past sixty years is a direct reflection of the dedicated efforts of a limited number of individuals. The first hero in the story is undoubtedly President Edmund J. James. When James entered the Presidency in 1905, the Library held only 75,000 volumes—a collection that had been nearly forty years in building. The State Legislature was persuaded by James to appropriate generous book funds, and the President himself traveled abroad to buy large collections. As a result, by the time President James retired in 1920, the Library owned 550,000 volumes, ranked sixth in size among the university libraries of the country, and was one of the fastest growing. Early in James' administration, 1909, he brought to the directorship of the Library Phineas Lawrence Windsor, who for the next thirty-one years also played a key role in the Library's expansion.

The momentum acquired under President James has never been lost at Illinois. A succession of presidents and other administrators, faculty members, trustees, legislators, and alumni have united to assure the Library's steady growth, qualitatively and quantitatively.

Over the past fifty years, the leading figures in collection development have been a small but highly potent group of faculty members, representing a variety of disciplines. Their guidance and advice in the building up of resources for research were, and in some cases continue to be, invaluable. These men possessed an encyclopedic

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knowledge of the literature of their own fields, past and present, and oftentimes of related areas; they checked new and antiquarian book catalogs as fast as they appeared; they were aware of the state of the book market; they were familiar with the Library's collections, what was there and what was lacking; and they maintained a relentless pressure on the librarian and the University administration for more book funds.

Among these latter-day heroes, a few names might be singled out for special mention: for classical languages and literature, William A. Oldfather; for Shakespeare and Elizabethan literature, Thomas W. Baldwin; for Milton and his era, Harris F. Fletcher; for nineteenth and twentieth-century English literature, Gordon N. Ray; for economic history, Nathan A. Weston; for Latin American history, William S. Robertson; for Middle Eastern history, Albert H. Lybyer; and for the history of science, George W. White. In a way, it is invidious to select so few individuals for special citation, for scores of others have had a hand in collection development; nevertheless, in looking at the record these names seem to stand out.

It should be emphasized at this point, however, that the faculty at Illinois has never had sole responsibility for the program of building a great research library. The library staff has also played an essential part. It is not an uncommon practice in college and university libraries for the staff to abdicate responsibility to the faculty for book collection and collection development. Laboring under the delusion that only scholarly specialists are competent to decide what materials are worth adding, the librarian assigns practically all funds to teaching departments, and treats his acquisition staff as order clerks. The consequences may well be disastrous.

At Illinois, there are departmental librarians with specialized training in engineering, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture, architecture, fine arts, law, history, classics, English, modern foreign languages, geography and maps, commerce and business administration, education, library science, and other fields, nearly all of whom are in the thick of efforts to build a library notable for its research collections. In addition, the personnel of the acquisition and serials departments, the reference and circulation librarians, and the catalogers all contribute in varying degrees to the total acquisition program.

The present state of the Illinois Library's resources will be clarified by brief descriptions of some of its specialized collections; the

notes will also be indicative of future directions, for in all instances the Library is continuing to add to the collections mentioned.

Beginning with the field of literature, a widely-known collection relates to John Milton and his times; this notable assemblage includes all first editions of Milton's writings printed in his own lifetime, while variant texts, editions after 1674, and critical works of all periods are comprehensively represented. For another great early figure, William Shakespeare, a strong working collection of texts and critical materials was gathered over the years, but it contained few stellar pieces until 1950. Then, with the aid of a generous alumnus, Ernest Ingold, there were acquired all four folios, the nine 1619 quartos, the 1640 *Poems*, and numerous other seventeenth-century and later editions, making the Illinois collection one of real distinction.

Concomitant with the collections for Milton, Shakespeare, and other leading literary figures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Illinois has brought together several groups of auxiliary works of unusual importance. Among them are a collection of early geographical atlases, British and continental, representing major and minor cartographers, from their beginning in the fifteenth-century to 1700, frequently in multiple editions. Other sections contain rich collections of early grammars and of English and Latin dictionaries and word lists from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries for the purpose of tracing the intellectual development of great writers.

Starting about fifteen years ago, the Library's eighteenth-century English literature holdings have been extensively developed. Three private collections acquired illustrate the trend: (1) the Lloyd F. Nickell collection, about 2,000 volumes of original editions of all the great names of English literature from 1700 to 1800; (2) the George Sherburn collection of 3,000 volumes, particularly strong in works relating to Alexander Pope, Richard Steele, and Henry Fielding, and in eighteenth-century periodicals; and (3) 400 volumes relating to Henry Fielding and his contemporaries, assembled by Henry C. Hutchins, Defoe bibliographer.

For nineteenth and twentieth-century English literature, acquisitions in recent years have been extensive. Standing out are the following groups: (1) about 10,000 titles in English fiction, poetry, and non-fictional prose collected by Gordon Ray on several buying trips to the British Isles; (2) the Tom Turner collection of 8,000 volumes of English poetry, fiction, and other prose for the period 1890-1949, assembled by a poet and short story writer of Baidon, England; (3) one

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of the most complete collections in existence of materials relating to William Cobbett, the early nineteenth-century author, publisher, bookseller, translator, political pamphleteer, journalist, economist, and playwright; (4) the archives of Richard Bentley, Grant Richards, and other nineteenth-century publishing firms; and (5) the papers and archives of H. G. Wells, consisting of book manuscripts, family correspondence, autograph letters, manuscripts of stories and articles, a file set of Wells' own works, and miscellaneous documents.

Several major collections of American literature have also been added to the Library during the past decade or so. One is the Franklin J. Meine collection of American humor and folklore, about 8,500 volumes of first editions of leading humorists and especially strong for the nineteenth-century; the collection includes extensive runs of early humor periodicals, comic almanacs, jest books, songs, and critical works on humor. Another highlight in the American field is Carl Sandburg's library and papers; among the printed and manuscript materials there are copies of virtually all editions of Sandburg's own works and original manuscripts for most, extensive correspondence with poets, statesmen, academicians, and others, several thousand volumes of inscribed and annotated poetry, and a large section of *Lincolniana*.

Also in the Lincoln field is the comprehensive Harlan H. Horner collection which came to Illinois in 1951; numbering about 4,000 books, pamphlets and periodicals, the collection comprises practically every significant printed work relating to the Great Emancipator, his contemporaries, and his times, plus numerous photographs, engravings, manuscripts, and objects associated with Lincoln. The Horner and Sandburg collections of *Lincolniana* have been substantially supplemented in the past few years by the libraries of James G. Randall and Harry E. Pratt, biographers of Lincoln. Complementary also is the Richard B. Harwell collection of more than 1,000 imprints of the Confederate states, acquired in 1961 at the beginning of the Civil War Centennial.

Elsewhere in the American history field, Illinois' principal strength is for the Mississippi Valley, for which its research resources include approximately 100,000 manuscripts and numerous early travel narratives and historical chronicles, newspapers, and journals for Western history.

Latin Americana has been a major interest at Illinois for a considerable term of years. The scope of the collection is broad: literature,

history, biography, travel, art, commerce, and natural resources. In 1953, the Library's already strong holdings were enriched by acquisition of the notable personal library of William Spence Robertson, Latin American historian, comprising 9,000 books, periodical volumes, pamphlets, and maps, and particularly strong for the revolutionary period in Latin America and Hispanic American relations with the United States.

Another area of the world is covered by the Albert H. Lybyer collection of about 5,000 books, periodicals, and pamphlets dealing with the history of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, and the Near East.

Collections in the social sciences in the Illinois Library are outstanding for international law and relations, law, political science, economics, labor and industrial relations, and education. Illustrative of the resources are two economic collections: (1) the Nathan A. Weston library of economic literature numbering some 6,000 volumes and particularly rich in economic theory and history, and (2) the Jacob Hollander library of economic history, a comprehensive assemblage of about 4,500 volumes, including the works of all the classical economists from 1574 to 1936. Also classified in the social sciences is the Ewing C. Baskette collection on freedom of expression, comprising thousands of books and other items from the sixteenth century to modern times on such subjects as anarchism, communism, socialism, censorship, constitutional rights, religious freedom, freedom of the press, labor union activities, and famous trials.

Illinois can demonstrate unusual strength in virtually every branch of science and technology: chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics, geography, the biological sciences, agriculture, architecture, and engineering. By systematic acquisition, the Library has acquired original editions of the works of nearly all the great historical figures in science in building up its history of science collection. Two special collections acquired within the past few years are examples of strength in the field of science: (1) from Harry G. Oberholser of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, a noteworthy ornithological collection including about 10,000 pamphlets, many extremely rare, and files of 600 periodicals dealing with birds throughout the world, and (2) the Henry B. Ward parasitological and microscopical collection of 15,000 volumes and 35,000 classified reprints, ranging in date from the sixteenth century to the present day and rich in early and scarce works in its field, assembled by one of the founders of the science of parasitology in the United States.

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The foregoing descriptions merely illustrate, of course, the extraordinary holdings of one of America's leading university libraries. The growth of the Illinois Library in the past sixty years has been phenomenal. Also noteworthy is the wide range of interests represented. Like other large American universities, there are virtually no limitations to Illinois' research and teaching activities, and this broad scope is necessarily reflected in the University's library collections.

What of current and future trends? A library is never finished. Research interests in a university are constantly changing. New departments are created, and old ones decline in importance or move in new directions. At the University of Illinois, the most far-reaching changes, literally and figuratively, in library acquisitions have occurred in the foreign field. This characteristic is not unique with Illinois. Beginning with World War II, the collecting concerns of American libraries, formerly largely restricted to the United States and Western Europe, have clearly become world-wide. The expanding library activities closely parallel the increased scholarly preoccupation with area studies.

At Illinois, the Library received a large block of material, about 37,000 volumes, through the Library of Congress Cooperative Project for the Acquisition of Wartime Publications. The conclusion of that massive undertaking in 1948 saw the inauguration of the Farmington Plan, in which Illinois has been a major participant from the beginning. Among the subject assignments for which the Library is responsible are business and commerce, public finance, Italian and French languages, French and Spanish literature, general technology and engineering, library science, general bibliography, and all publications originating in Brazil. Receipts at Illinois under the Farmington Plan since 1948 total approximately 55,000 volumes.

More recently, in response to the creation of a Center for Russian Language and Area Studies, a Latin American Studies Center, and an Asian Studies Program, intensive acquisition programs of a supporting character are being carried on by the Illinois Library. In the Slavic field alone, about 110,000 volumes have been added in the past seven years. Since 1962, the Library has participated in the Public Law 480 Program for Indian and Pakistani publications, and starting in 1964, for Indonesian and United Arab Republic publications. The buildup of Chinese and Japanese materials through direct purchase is also actively under way. For Latin America, an area of long-time concern as previously indicated, the Library has joined the Stechert-

Hafner Latin American Cooperative Project in an effort to procure all current publications of research value from that vast region. A limited program for Africa, mainly in Kenya and Sierra Leone, is also in progress.

Such programs as these, being carried on at Illinois and other leading universities throughout the country, are concrete recognition of the position of world leadership occupied by the United States, whether it desires the role or not.

Obviously, the present period is an era when the outpouring of print in all its forms has become enormous, pointing toward an acute necessity for carefully defined acquisition policies, specialization of fields among libraries, and cooperative acquisition plans. Further, the building of large research collections is as much or more for the future than for the present. A high proportion of books and related materials is acquired by Illinois and other research libraries for the sake of completeness and to strengthen existing resources with potential usefulness rather than immediate demands in mind. A certain amount of clairvoyance is therefore required to determine what is actually significant from a long-range viewpoint. Finally, the *laissez faire* philosophy which university librarians are inclined to follow, attempting to achieve virtual autonomy in wide areas of knowledge and to serve all the needs of their clienteles without reference to other institutions, probably calls for re-examination. Thus far in an age of affluence, the sky appears to be the limit, e.g., in 1964-65, Illinois was one of eight university libraries each spending more than \$1,000,000 for books, one of forty-five holding more than one million volumes each, and one of eight acquiring more than 100,000 volumes during the year. The figures rapidly become more astronomical with the passage of time.

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